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## **THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF THE YOUNG KAZAHSTANI FAMILIES**

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This article formulates recommendations to address the main challenges for young families in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The recommendations are based on the results of a rapid survey conducted by two Departments of Social Work at two universities.

**Keywords:** young families; rapid survey; respondents; family microenvironment.

Family is a basic institute of reproduction of human generations and their primary means of socialization. Family has a profound influence on the evolution of personality and provides a variety of communication forms for people in various spheres of human activity in a society. Disorganization of this social institution is a real threat to the future of a human society. According to the social development prospects, a young family as a powerful factor for change has a special social value.

The contemporary situation in Kazakhstan creates a need to study the problems of Kazakhstani families. These problems become noticeable not only for the professionals but also for a wider public. Therefore, a social significance of the study of marriage and family in the context of a new rethinking increases dramatically.

There are some scientific works that are devoted to social problems of a young family. These works are written by the researchers from Kazakhstan (Zhanazarova, 2004; Gablullina, 1997), Russia (Matskovsky, 1998) and other countries (Eidemiller, 2002). Young families belong to a special group of a society. It is a social group and a public institute simultaneously.

A young family is a peculiar model of a society and its social relations. Young families affect a society being in difficult relations with it; they are also influenced by its economic, political, and legal systems. In the contemporary conditions, a young Kazakhstani family is at a crossroads of two large-scale processes: radical changes in a social development and a modernization of the family institute itself

(Basov, 2008). The life of young families is influenced greatly by a social, economic, and psychological crisis as well as financial and spiritual problems.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has a large social program that is aimed to support young families and based on the strong legislative foundation (The Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan [PRK], 1998). Particularly, the Kazakhstani government is implementing an effective social policy to provide young families with housing and improve a demographic situation through the program *Affordable Housing – 2020*. Nevertheless, there is a need to monitor the existing problems of a young family for the timely detection of problems and improvement of comprehensive support.

There is an empirical study that was conducted in the Akmola region of the Republic of Kazakhstan in June 2014. The main aim of the study was to explore challenges of the Kazakhstani families. Six hundred respondents were interviewed. The age of the youth respondents is defined by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, i.e. all of them are the young citizens aged from 14 to 29 (PRK, 2004). The representativeness of age and place of residence is provided by the sample. More than that, the sample covers 17 districts of the Akmola region, the city of Kokshetau, its administrative center, and the town of Stepnogorsk. Questionnaire survey is a method of interrogation. The statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS software. The research was conducted with the support of *The Office of Youth Policy*, a state institution of the Akmola region. The aim of the study was to explore a range of fundamental problems of young families.

The main problems of the research are the following:

- Determine a marital status of young people (its *status quo*);
- Study a level of the reproductive function of young families;
- Identify a typical family microenvironment of the youth;
- Determine an attitude of young people toward different forms of family living.

The object of the research is the young people of the Akmola region aged from 14 to 29. The subject of the research is the attitude of young people to the problems of young families.

The social portrait of the respondents is shown by the following statistical data in the table No.

1. The actual and preferable reproduction of the respondents of the study is shown in the table No. 2.

Table 1

**A Social Portrait of the Youth Respondents, %**

No.	Category		Results of the survey
1.	<b>Gender</b>	Men	57.8
		Women	42.2
2.	<b>Education</b>	Higher education	44.8
		Incomplete higher education	2.5
		Secondary education	33
		Vocational education	19
3.	<b>Nationality</b>	Kazakhs	68
		Russians	21.3
		Other	10.7
4.	<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	52.5
		Married	42.2
		Divorced	4.5
		Did not answer	0.8

Table 2

<b>Actual and Preferable Reproduction of the Respondents, %</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Results of the survey</b>
1.	Do not have children	47.2
2.	Parents of children aged from 1 to 5	40.2
3.	Want to have 1 child	3.3
4.	Want to have 2 children	29.5
5.	Want to have 3 children	23.2
6.	Want to have 4 children	8.8
7.	Want to have 5 and more children	8.5
8.	Did not respond or were undecided ( <b>in total</b> )	26.7

The study was also conducted to identify a typical family microenvironment. The results may be found in the table No. 3.

Table 3

<b>A Typical Family Microenvironment, %</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Results of the survey</b>
1.	Understanding, harmony and common goals	70.2
2.	Diversity of views and lifestyle but if there is goodwill and tolerance in the family	21.5
3.	Indifference to each other, complete misunderstanding and alienation, mutual claims, resentment and hostility	> 1
4.	Were undecided	5.5
5.	Did not answer	1.5

The length of the relationships is an important factor in the divorce rate. The following results have been made by emphasizing this factor as a young family's challenge: 49.2 % of the respondents think that a longer period reduces the range of problems in the family; however, 38% do not agree with them. The total percentage of those who did not respond or was undecided is 12.8%.

The balance of rights and responsibilities in a married couple greatly influences all family functions and is defined in a specific typology. An egalitarian family (an equal family), in which functions of budgeting, housekeeping and joint decision-making are equally distributed, is a sign of the modern secular society. In contradiction, there is a traditional family type. In this type of family, a man forms a family budget and makes decisions, while a woman is the household. The survey shows that 82.2 % of the respondents support an equal sharing of rights, but 11.5% of them are against of this. Additionally, a small proportion of the responders (6.3%) did not respond or was undecided.

The study also explores the attitude of young people toward the risk factor called *misalliance* (an unequal marriage). It shows that 52.5% of the respondents believe that an unequal marriage has more internal problems, 31.2% do not agree with the majority, and 16.3% did not answer or were undecided.

Raising children is the most important function of the family. The process of children's socialization depends on the family members. Also, the research had a goal to define the most pressing problems of the Kazakhstani young family. You may find the results of the survey on these two questions in the table No. 4 and the table No. 5. As it is obvious from the table No. 5, the most pressing problem for a young family is the lack of housing. Therefore, a question regarding an effective way to solve the housing problem has been included in the questionnaire.

Table 4

**Who Should Bring Up Children in the Family, %**

No.	Category	Results of the survey
1.	Both parents	92.7
2.	Mother	4.7
3.	Father	1.2
4.	Grandparents and others	> 1

Table 5

**The Most Pressing Problem for a Young Family, %**

No.	Category	Results of the survey
1.	Lack of housing	43.3
2.	Financial troubles	33.8
3.	Lack of a prestigious job	10.7
4.	Health issues	3.2
5.	Other	5.3
6.	Lack of love, shortage of places in kindergartens, no children (in total)	1

Table 6

**The Most Effective Way to Solve the Housing Problem, %**

No.	Category	Results of the survey
1.	Getting a piece of land and building a house	22.8%,
2.	Participation in governmental programs that support young families	19.3%
3.	Accumulation of funds in the <i>Zhilstroy</i> bank	17.2%
4.	Getting a mortgage in a commercial bank	9.8%
5.	Using own savings	7.5%
6.	Taking part in a rental housing program	5.8
7.	Working in a village and buying a house there	3.2
8.	Were undecided	14.3

The degree of knowledge of the Code *On Marriage and Family* is an indicator of legal literacy of young family members. The results of the rapid survey show that the majority of the respondents is familiar with the Code (53.7%). The number of people who are not familiar with it is 38.2%. There are also some respondents who did not answer or were undecided (7.2%).

One of the most serious concerns for a young Kazakhstani family is the attitude of young people toward forms of family. The respondents were asked about their attitude toward bigamy, same-sex marriage, Muslim marriage and interracial marriage. You may find their answers in the table No.7. More than that, the study shows that the establishment of clubs for young families is a necessary means of strengthening the institution of the family (68.7% agree with this statement; 16.5% do not agree; 14.9% did not answer or were undecided). Unfortunately, trends in the development of family relations in Kazakhstan show an increase in the number of divorces, including young families. You may find what our respondents think about the main causes of divorce in the table No. 8.

Table 7

**An Attitude toward Forms of Family Living, %**

No.	Category	Results of the survey				
		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Undecided	Did not answer
1.	Bigamy	5	77.5	11	6	0.5
2.	Same-sex marriage	2.3	79.2	12.3	5	1.2
3.	Muslim marriage	59.2	8.7	23.2	9	
4.	Interracial marriage	55	8.8	31	5.2	

Table 8

**The Main Causes of Divorce, %**

No.	Category	Results of the survey
1.	Financial difficulties	23.3
2.	A difference of views	11.5
3.	Indifferent to each other, complete misunderstanding and alienation	11
4.	Housing difficulties	6.2
5.	Adultery	4.5
6.	Early marriage	3.7
7.	Lack of patience, respect and responsibility to the family	3.2
8.	Household problems	2.7
9.	Incompatibility of character	1.7
10.	Lack of knowledge on the psychology of family relations; alcohol; no children; not ready for marriage; a marriage of convenience; a casual attitude toward marriage; intervention of parents in family life; unemployment; lack of love; uncertainty of career at work; children; assault and battery; foolishness; promiscuity of young people ( <b>in total</b> ).	32.4
11.	Did not answer	21.7
12.	Were undecided	2

As the result of the study, the following conclusions and recommendations have been made:

1. On the issue of reproductive function of the family, it can be noted that the desire to have more children is much higher than the current number of children in the young families. We can observe a readiness of young families to increase the number of children. However, the age of the respondents, which do not have children for obvious reasons (14 years), should be taken into account.

2. According to the research on family microclimate, understanding, harmony and common goals prevail in most families. Also, the diversity of views is acceptable, if there is goodwill and tolerance in the family.

3. There are factors that have received dominant indicators (long-term relationships, equal distribution of rights and responsibilities, misalliance). This fact confirms their positive impact on strengthening a young family.

4. The economic problems (lack of own housing and financial difficulties) are central for young families. This fact shows a strong need for action by public authorities to address these issues.

5. Three answers took approximately equal position in solving the housing problem. These answers are (1) getting a piece of land and building a house, (2) participation in governmental programs that support young families, and (3) accumulation of funds in the *Zhilstroy* bank.

6. The vast majority are aware of the Code *On Family and Marriage*. However, just under half of the respondents are not familiar with it. Accordingly, it is necessary to conduct explanatory work in this field in educational institutions. In addition, there is a need to develop a plan of action for non-governmental organizations and government bodies dealing with the young families in Kazakhstan.

7. Bigamy and same-sex marriage have a negative attitude among the Kazakhstani youth. Conversely, Muslim and interethnic marriages have positive characteristics.

8. Economic factors are the main cause of divorce. Interpersonal relations and external factors make up the next group of causes of divorce.

9. Establishment of clubs for young families is offered as a recommendation for solving problems of young families. Most respondents confirmed the need for such clubs.

In conclusion, public policy should take into account a range of measures on social, economic and legal protection of young families. Regulatory and legal framework of a comprehensive support of young families should be improved. This measure will have a positive impact on strengthening the social status of a young family; it will raise its social significance in a society. In addition, it will have a positive impact on increasing the birth rate and the level of welfare of a large part of young families.

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